August 21, 1968

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# LOW LEVEL WIND GUST AMPLITUDE AND DURATION STUDY

Aero-Astrodynamics Laboratory

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#### TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM X-53771

#### LOW LEVEL WIND GUST AMPLITUDE AND DURATION STUDY

Ву

Dennis W. Camp

George C. Marshall Space Flight Center Huntsville, Alabama

#### ABSTRACT

Presented is some information on low level wind gust amplitude and frequency of occurrence as a function of gust duration period. The wind data from which these characteristics were determined were obtained from NASA's 150-meter Meteorological Tower Facility located in the Merritt Island Launch Area at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida.

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AERO-ASTRODYNAMICS LABORATORY
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONS

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#### TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM X-53771

#### LOW LEVEL WIND GUST AMPLITUDE AND DURATION STUDY

#### SUMMARY

Presented is some information on low level wind gust amplitude and gust frequency of occurrence as a function of gust duration period. The wind data from which these characteristics were determined were obtained from NASA's 150-meter Meteorological Tower Facility located in the Merritt Island Launch Area at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida. This report shows that a statistical gust shape may be characterized by a fast build-up rate, a constant mid-portion, and a fast decay rate. Further, it is shown that the largest percentage of gusts occur for the shortest gust duration period.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In the design, launch, and flight of large space vehicles, it is important to consider the magnitude of the loads caused by variations from the quasi-steady wind conditions. Such variations are commonly referred to as wind gusts. It is known that large- and small-scale wind velocity variations influence vertically rising vehicles whether on the launch pad or in flight (reference 1).

A specific problem concerning wind loading on a vertical rising vehicle is that of low-level (surface to 150-meter) wind variations (gustiness). The characteristics of gusts, such as statistical shape and frequency of occurrence, are important in determining the influence of gusts on vehicles. Exact characteristics of high frequency gusts cannot be determined from most available wind data because of the response limitations of the measuring instruments. These characteristics can be determined, with reasonable accuracy, however, for gusts with periods of a few seconds and longer (lower frequency), using conventional measuring equipment such as the Climet Model CI-14 anemometer which was used to measure the wind data for this report. The response characteristics of the Climet Model CI-14 anemometer are presented in References 2 through 4.

#### II. GUST CHARACTERISTICS

Before discussing the characteristics of a gust, it is expedient to define the wind gust as used in this report. A wind gust is defined as a build-up in the measured instantaneous\* wind speed above a two-minute arithmetic mean wind speed to an amplitude equal to or greater than 0.5 meters per second and a decay back to the mean wind speed. The twominute mean was computed for the first two minutes of a given set of wind data. The numerical difference between the measured instantaneous and the mean wind speeds was determined using a data interval of 0.5 second and tabulated in a frequency distribution. These differences were used to determine the statistical gusts. After all the differences (gust values) had been determined for the first two-minute mean and tabulated, a second two-minute mean was computed for the second and third minutes of the given set of wind data. The gusts for this two-minute mean were also determined and tabulated. This procedure was then stepped to the third and fourth minutes, fourth and fifth minutes, etc., until all of the wind data in the given wind record were used.

The wind gusts as determined by the procedure described above had the following characteristics: (1) An amplitude equal to or greater than the specified value of 0.5 meters per second, where the amplitude of a gust is defined to be the maximum difference between the mean and measured instantaneous wind speeds occurring within a gust. (2) A period equal to or greater than 4.0 seconds and equal to or less than 58.0 seconds ( $4.0 \le P \le 58.0$ ). The reason for the 4.0 second minimum is that even though a gust could be defined (obtained) for a shorter period than 4.0 seconds, it was believed that the gust would be more realistically defined for the longer period. Thus, a 4.0 second minimum period was arbitrarily selected. The upper limit of 58.0 seconds was used as a cut-off point for reasons of convenience.

The gusts as defined above were classified according to gust duration period and sensor location. Class intervals for the duration period were 4.0-5.9, 6.0-7.9, 8.0-9.9, 10.0-13.9, 14.0-17.9, ..., 54.0-58.0 seconds. The starting point of a gust is the point where the measured instantaneous wind speed crosses the mean wind speed, and the end of a gust is the point where the measured instantaneous wind speed returns to the mean. Thus, it is readily seen there will, in all probability, be fewer gust points used to determine the statistics at the end of a gust than at the start and mid-portion of a gust. After all of the gusts had

<sup>\*</sup>Instantaneous as used in this report refers to the wind speed values recorded at 0.5-second intervals using the Climet Model CI-14 anemometer and an Ampex FR-1200 magnetic tape system.

been classified, they were tabulated in a cumulative frequency distribution (CFD). The 50, 90, 95, and 99 percentage levels from the CFD's are plotted in figures 1 through 31. Figures 32 and 33 show the percentage of occurrence of gusts as a function of gust duration period. These figures show, as expected, the largest percentage of the gusts occur in the shortest gust duration period.

Figures 1 through 31 are referred to as the statistical gusts, which can be characterized by three factors: (1) a fast build-up rate, (2) a constant mid-portion, and (3) a fast decay rate. The decay rate, however, is not quite so fast as the build-up rate. An analysis of the reasons for this difference in the accelerations (build-up and decay rates) is beyond the scope of this report. It is anticipated, however, that a study of this difference will be made in the near future.

A check was made to see if the accelerations obtained for the statistical gusts were feasible. This was done by comparing the statistical gust accelerations with the theoretical maximum (limiting) acceleration possible for the anemometers used to obtain the wind data for this study (the Climet Model CI-14). The limiting acceleration was computed by use of

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}\mathbf{U}}{\mathrm{d}\mathbf{t}} = \Delta \mathbf{U} \frac{\mathbf{U}_{\mathbf{e}}}{\mathbf{L}} \exp\left(-\frac{\mathbf{U}_{\mathbf{e}}^{\mathbf{t}}}{\mathbf{L}}\right), \tag{1}$$

where (reference 4)

$$U = \Delta U \left[ 1 - \exp \left( -\frac{U_e^t}{L} \right) \right], \qquad (2)$$

and  $\triangle$ I is the change in wind speed,  $U_e$  is the final equilibrium wind speed value, L is the distance constant (0.73 meters), and t is time. The computation was performed using a time constant equal to one  $(\frac{U_e t}{L} = 1)$ . Several curves were computed (different  $\triangle$ I values) in order that the feasibility of the acceleration rates of the statistical gusts could be checked. The feasibility of the statistical gust maximum acceleration rates can be easily checked by comparing them with the theoretical rates in figure 34. This comparison can be made by determining the slope (acceleration) of a given statistical curve. For example, the 99 percent statistical gust acceleration for the first half-second in figure 3 is approximately 8.0 m/sec<sup>2</sup>. The 8.0 m/sec<sup>2</sup> value should be compared to the value of approximately 32.0 m/sec<sup>2</sup> given in figure 34 for an equilibrium speed of 16.2 m/sec and a  $\triangle$ I of 4.0 m/sec. Thus, the comparison shows that the 8.0 m/sec<sup>2</sup> value is a physically possible acceleration. The procedure for determining the values cited is as follows:

(1) The acceleration for the statistical curve was found by dividing the wind speed change  $(\Delta U)$  by the time interval  $(\Delta t)$  of the data

$$\frac{\Delta U}{\Delta t} \simeq \frac{4.0}{0.5} = 8.0 \text{ m/sec}^2.$$
 (3)

(2) However, before the acceleration values given in figure 34 can be used, the mean wind speed value must be determined for the statistical gust shape. This mean may be estimated by use of the gust factor equation

$$GF = \frac{\overline{U} + U'}{\overline{\Pi}}, \qquad (4)$$

where GF is the gust factor and is found to be 1.45 (reference 5),  $\bar{U}$  is the mean wind speed and U' is the maximum wind speed occurring within the gust (5.5 m/sec in this case, fig. 3). Thus, the mean is found to be approximately 12.2 m/sec. The gust factor value of 1.45 was determined [5] from 2957 data samples obtained for the month of September 1966, for a height of 18 meters at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida. For other heights, wind speeds, stability, etc., different gust factors may be obtained.

(3) From figure 3 it is seen that for  $\Delta J = 4$  m/sec and  $U_e = \bar{U} + \Delta J = 16.2$  m/sec the theoretical maximum acceleration possible for the Climet anemometer is approximately 32.0 m/sec<sup>2</sup>. Using this type of comparison any acceleration found for a given anemometer (in this case, a Climet) may be checked to determine if the measured wind speed changes (accelerations) are possible.

Histograms were determined for the number of gusts obtained from the wind records used in this program versus gust duration time. These histograms are presented in figures 32-33. These histograms show that the largest percentage of gusts occur for the shortest duration period. Furthermore, there is no significant difference between the histograms for the various heights.

#### III. COMMENTS

This report has shown that a statistical gust shape is characterized by three factors: (1) fast build-up rate, (2) constant mid-portion, and (3) fast decay rate. It was also shown that the largest percentage of gusts occur for the shortest gust duration period. Furthermore, it has been shown that the Climet Model CI-14 is capable of measuring faster build-up and decay rates than observed in the free atmosphere and presented in this report.

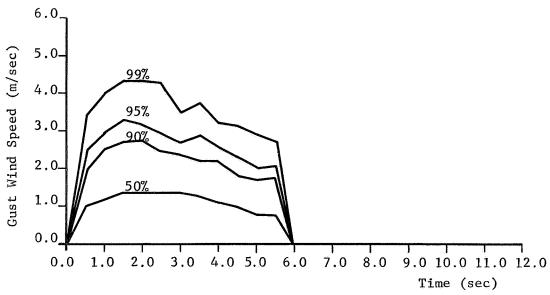


Fig. 1. Statistical Gust Based on 678 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter
Level

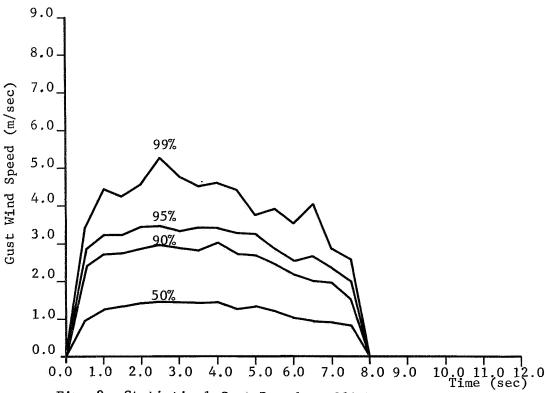


Fig. 2. Statistical Gust Based on 363 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter Level

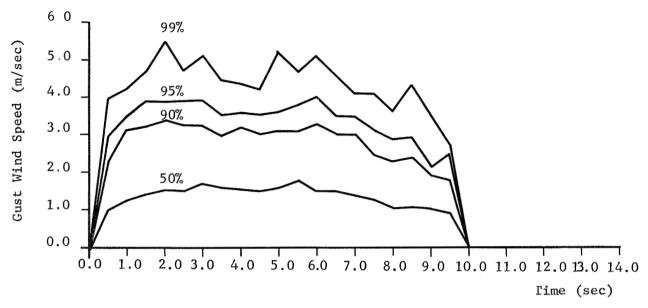


Fig. 3. Statistical Gust Based on 216 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter Level

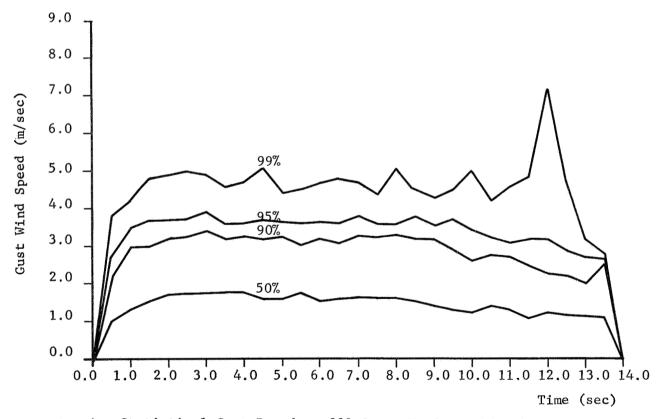
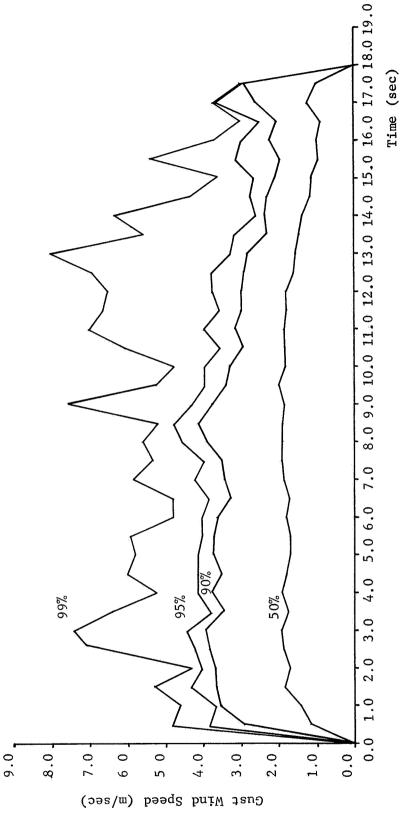
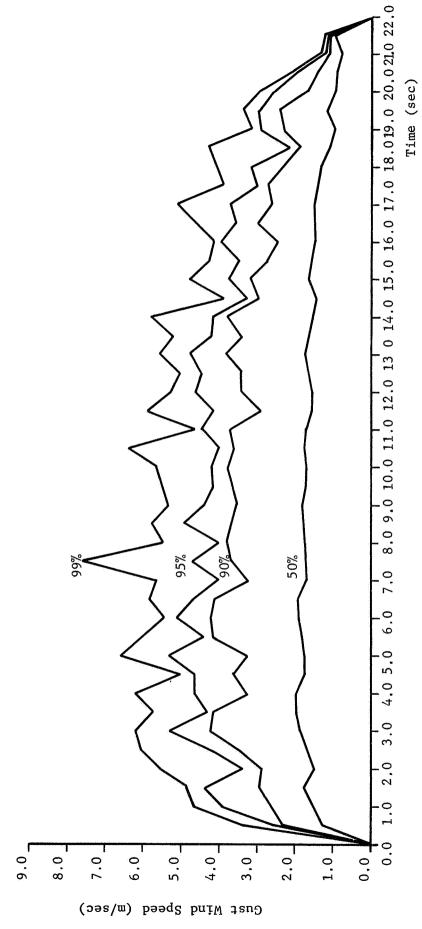


Fig. 4. Statistical Gust Based on 220 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter Level



Statistical Gust Based on 88 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter Level Fig. 5.



Statistical Gust Based on 52 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 18 to 22 Seconds Occurring at the 18-meter Level Fig. 6.

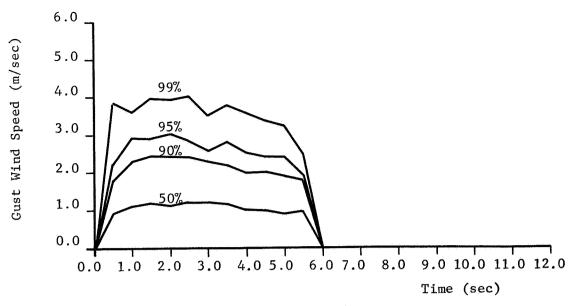


Fig. 7. Statistical Gust Based on 613 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 30-meter Level

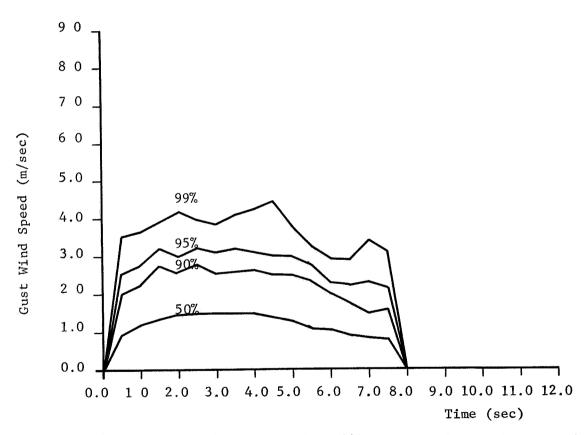


Fig. 8. Statistical Gust Based on 331 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 30-meter Level

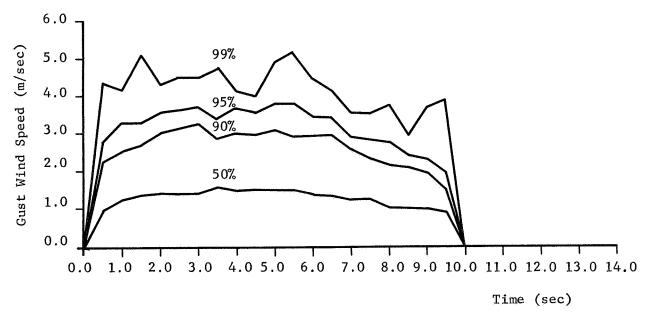


Fig. 9. Statistical Gust Based on 201 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 30-meter Level

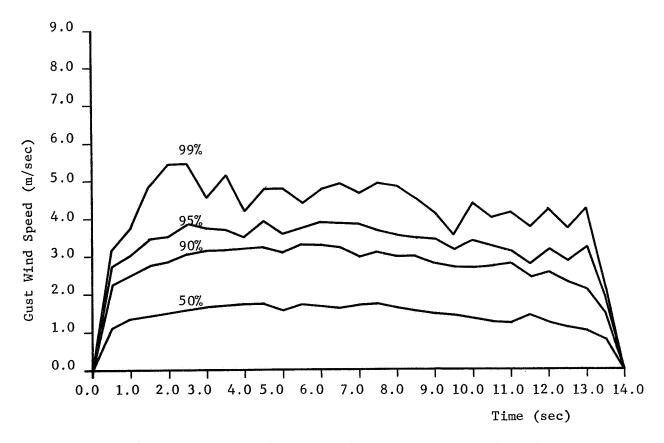
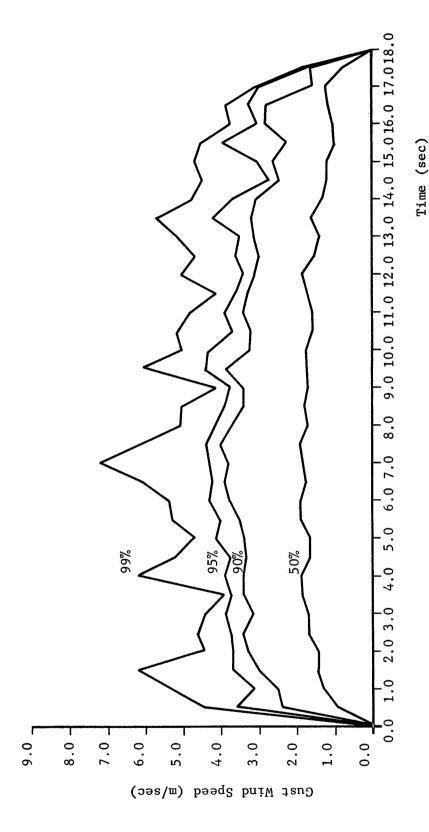


Fig. 10. Statistical Gust Based on 235 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 30-meter Level



Statistical Gust Based on 99 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 30-meter Level Fig. 11.

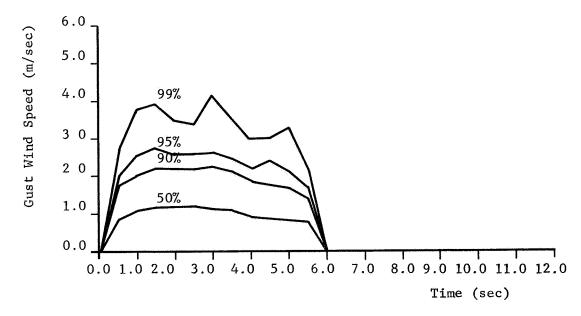


Fig. 12. Statistical Gust Based on 612 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 60-meter Level

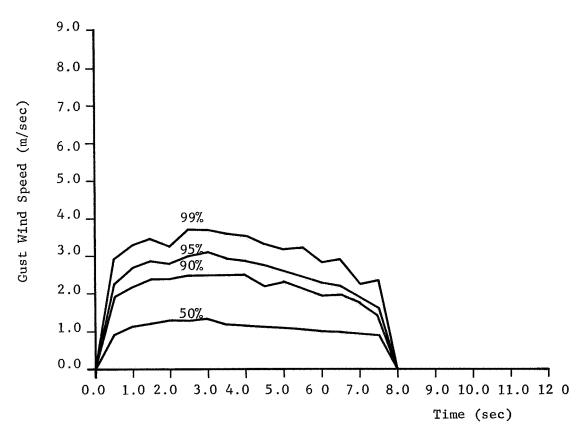


Fig. 13. Statistical Gust Based on 313 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 60-meter Level

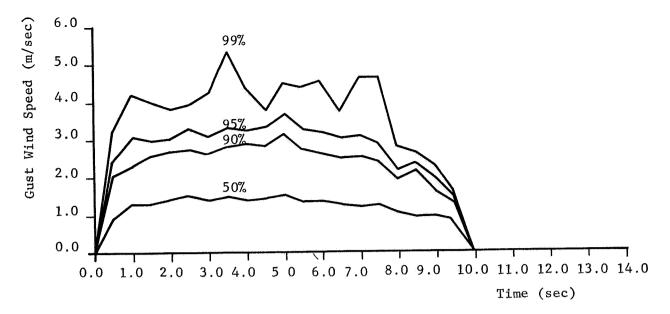


Fig. 14. Statistical Gust Based on 190 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 60-meter Level

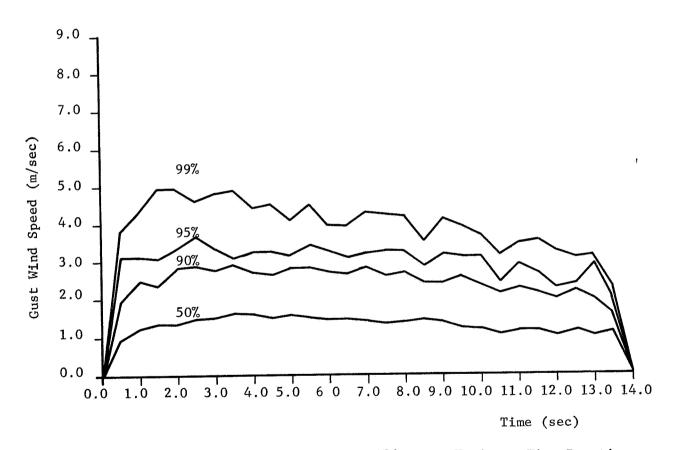
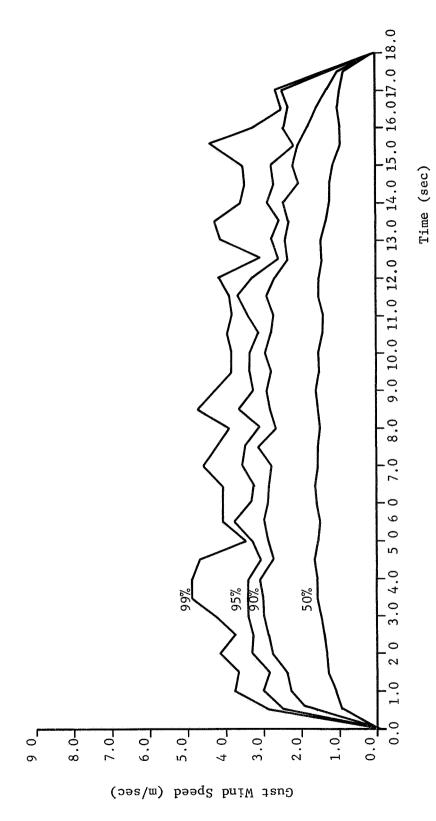


Fig. 15. Statistical Gust Based on 186 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 60-meter Level



Statistical Gust Based on 130 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 60-meter Level16. Fig

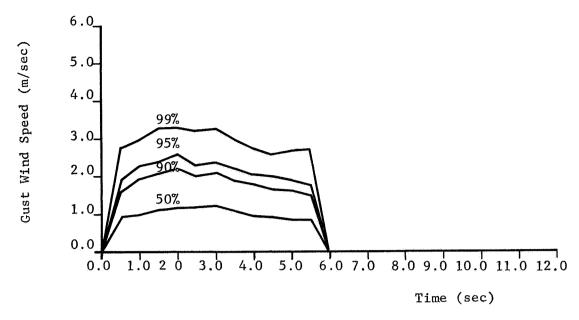


Fig. 17. Statistical Gust Based on 600 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 90-meter
Level

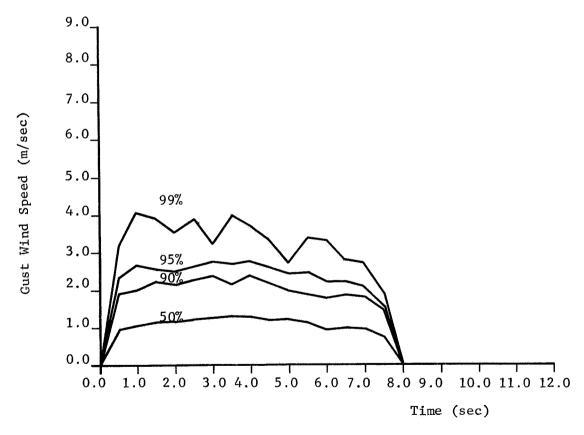


Fig. 18. Statistical Gust Based on 300 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 90-meter
Level

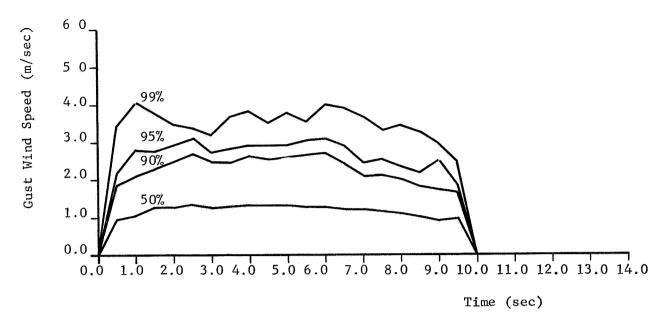


Fig 19. Statistical Gust Based on 196 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 90-meter Level

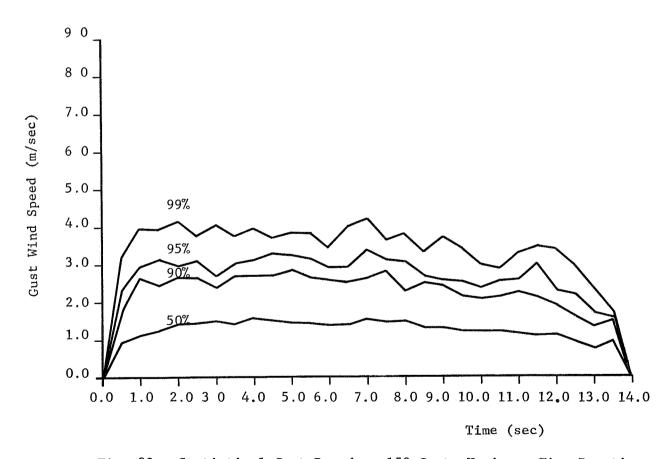
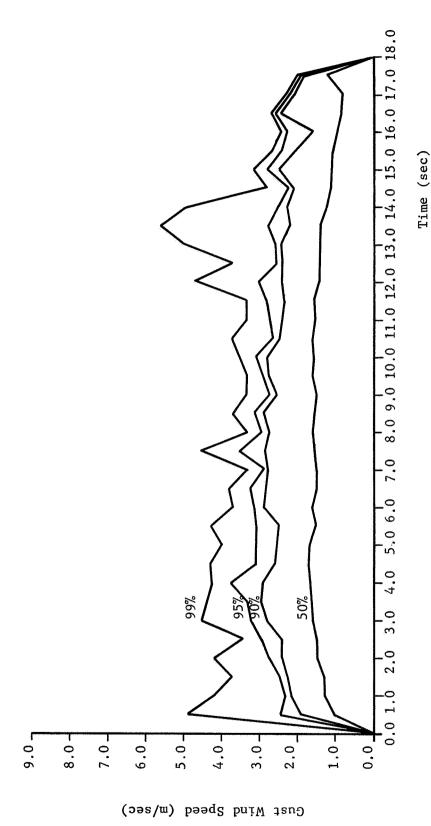


Fig. 20. Statistical Gust Based on 159 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 90-meter Level



Statistical Gust Based on 72 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 90-meter Level Fig. 21.

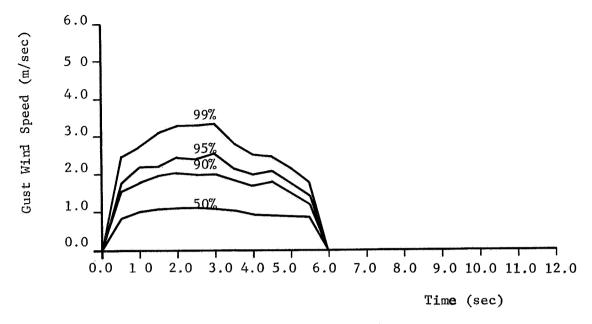


Fig. 22. Statistical Gust Based on 570 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 120-meter
Level

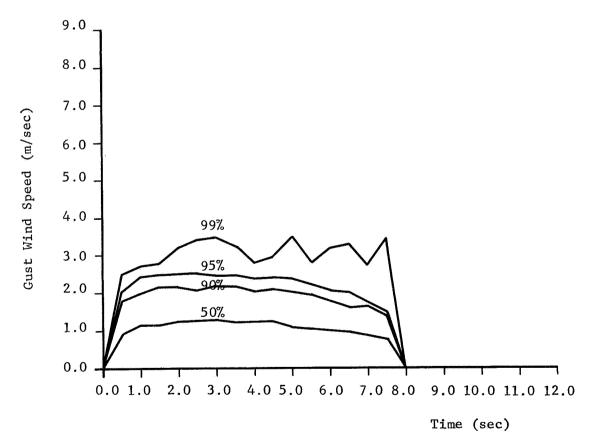


Fig. 23. Statistical Gust Based on 280 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 120-meter Level

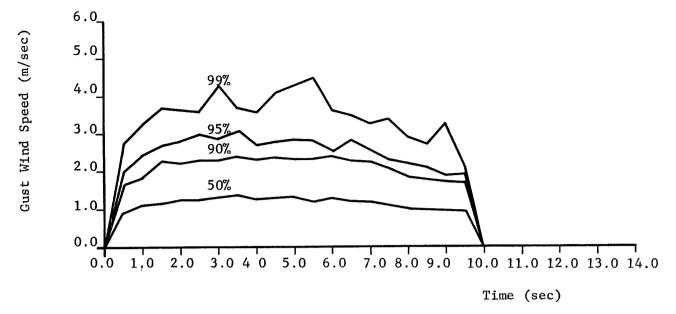


Fig. 24. Statistical Gust Based on 186 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 120-meter Level

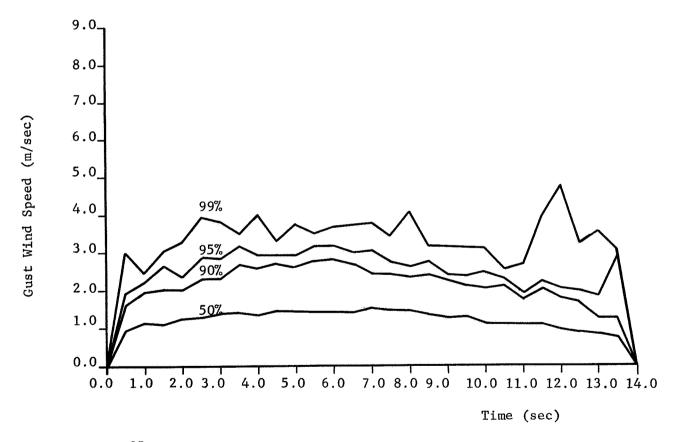
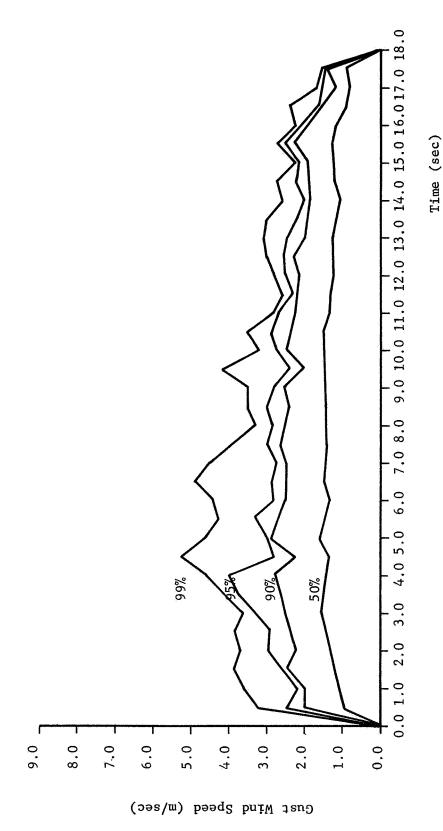


Fig. 25. Statistical Gust Based on 152 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 120-meter Level



Statistical Gust Based on 75 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 120-meter Level Fig. 26.

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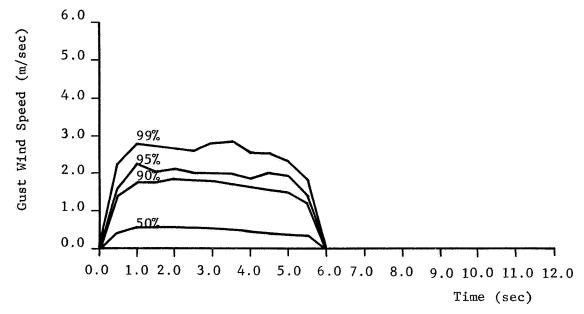


Fig. 27. Statistical Gust Based on 587 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 4 to 6 Seconds Occurring at the 150-meter Level

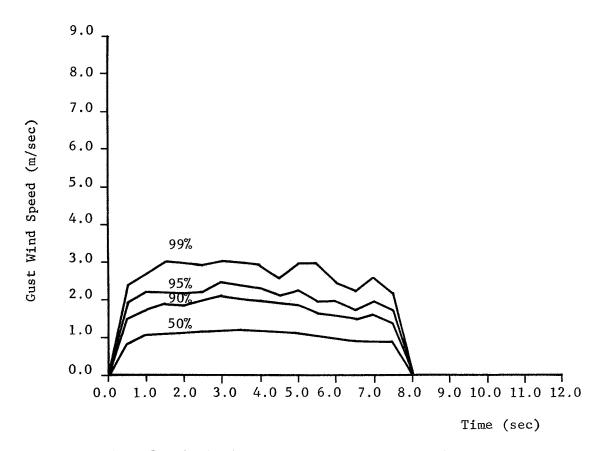


Fig. 28. Statistical Gust Based on 265 Gusts Having a Time
Duration of 6 to 8 Seconds Occurring at the 150-meter
Level

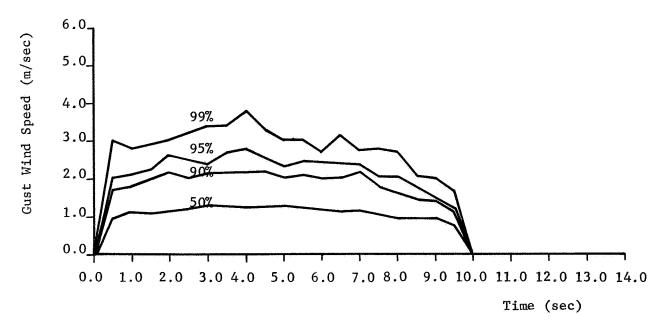


Fig. 29. Statistical Gust Based on 174 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 8 to 10 Seconds Occurring at the 150-meter Level

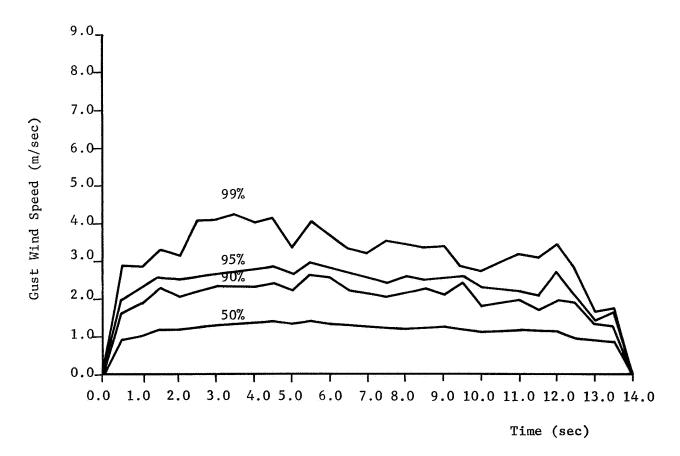
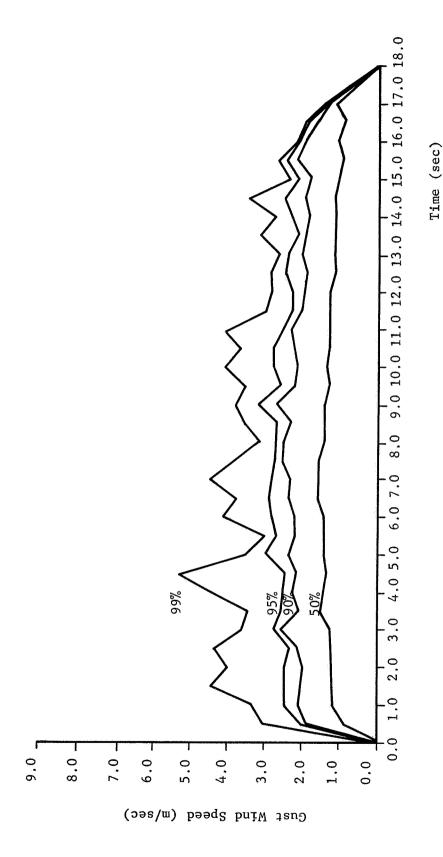


Fig. 30. Statistical Gust Based on 166 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 10 to 14 Seconds Occurring at the 150-meter Level



23

Statistical Gust Based on 68 Gusts Having a Time Duration of 14 to 18 Seconds Occurring at the 150-meter Level

Fig. 31

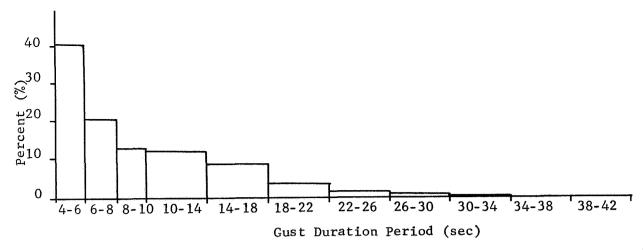


Fig. 32a. Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods Based on 1525 Gusts Recorded at the 60-Meter Level

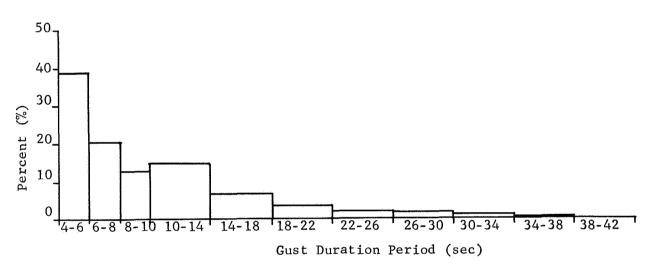


Fig. 32b Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods Based on 1577 Gusts Recorded at the 30-Meter Level

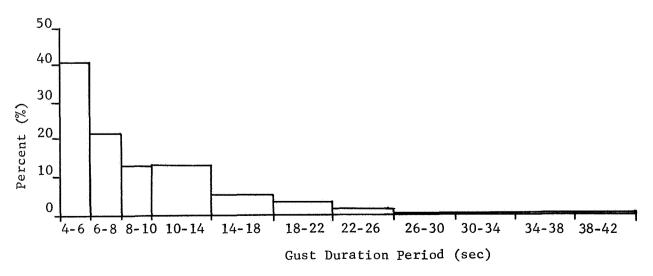


Fig. 32c. Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods Based on 1654 Gusts Recorded at the 18-Meter Level

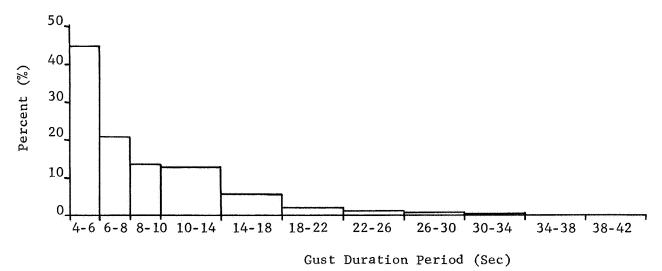


Fig. 33a. Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods
Based on 1313 Gusts Recorded at the 150-Meter Level

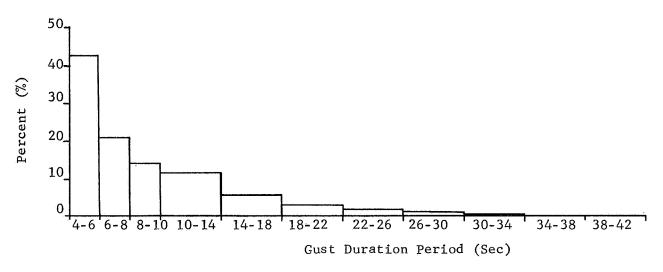


Fig. 33b. Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods
Based on 1339 Gusts Recorded at the 120-Meter Level

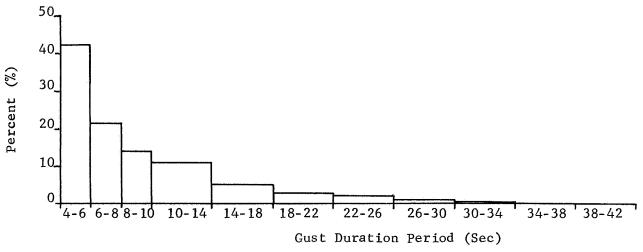


Fig. 33c. Percentage of Occurrence of Gusts Having Various Duration Periods Based on 1425 Gusts Recorded at the 90-Meter Level

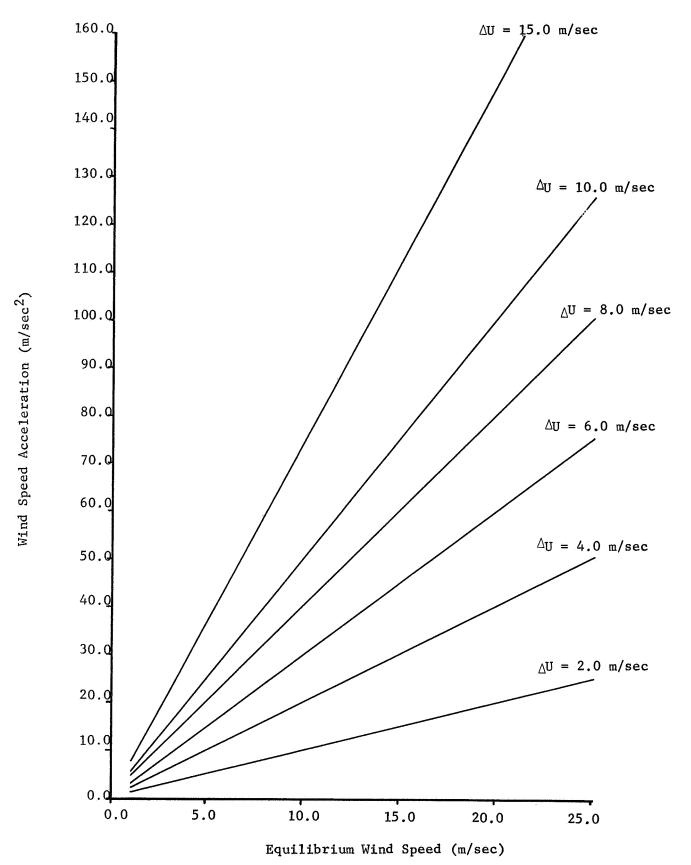


Fig. 34. Theoretical Maximum Acceleration for the Climet Model C1-14 Anemometer for a Time Constant of One Second

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## LOW LEVEL WIND GUST AMPLITUDE AND DURATION STUDY

by Dennis W. Camp

The information in this report has been reviewed for security classification. Review of any information concerning Department of Defense or Atomic Energy Commission programs has been made by the MSFC Security Classification Officer. This report, in its entirety, has been determined to be unclassified.

This document has also been reviewed and approved for technical accuracy.

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